

§ 4022.2

29 CFR Ch. XL (7–1–11 Edition)

Subpart D prescribes procedures that minimize the overpayment of benefits by plan administrators after initiating distress terminations of single-employer plans that are not expected to be sufficient for guaranteed benefits. Subpart E sets forth the method of recoupment of benefit payments in excess of the amounts permitted under sections 4022, 4022B, and 4044 of ERISA from participants and beneficiaries in PBGC-trusted plans, and provides for reimbursement of benefit underpayments. (The provisions of this part have not been amended to take account of changes made in section 4022 of ERISA by sections 766 and 777 of the Retirement Protection Act of 1994.)

[61 FR 34028, July 1, 1996, as amended at 62 FR 67728, Dec. 30, 1997]

§ 4022.2 Definitions.

The following terms are defined in § 4001.2 of this chapter: annuity, Code, employer, ERISA, guaranteed benefit, mandatory employee contributions, nonforfeitable benefit, normal retirement age, notice of intent to terminate, PBGC, person, plan, plan administrator, plan year, PPA 2006 bankruptcy termination, proposed termination date, statutory hybrid plan, substantial owner, and title IV benefit.

In addition, for purposes of this part (unless otherwise required by the context):

Accumulated mandatory employee contributions means mandatory employee contributions plus interest credited on those contributions under the plan, or, if greater, interest required by section 204(c) of ERISA.

Benefit in pay status means that one or more benefit payments have been made or would have been made except for administrative delay.

Benefit increase means any benefit arising from the adoption of a new plan or an increase in the value of benefits payable arising from an amendment to an existing plan. Such increases include, but are not limited to, a scheduled increase in benefits under a plan or plan amendment, such as a cost-of-living increase, and any change in plan provisions which advances a participant's or beneficiary's entitlement to a benefit, such as liberalized participation requirements or vesting schedules,

reductions in the normal or early retirement age under a plan, and changes in the form of benefit payments. In the case of a plan under which the amount of benefits depends on the participant's salary and the participant receives a salary increase the resulting increase in benefits to which the participant becomes entitled will not, for the purpose of this part, be treated as a benefit increase. Similarly, in the case of a plan under which the amount of benefits depends on the participant's age or service, and the participant becomes entitled to increased benefits solely because of advancement in age or service, the increased benefits to which the participant becomes entitled will not, for the purpose of this part, be treated as a benefit increase.

Covered employment means employment with respect to which benefits accrue under a plan.

Pension benefit means a benefit payable as an annuity, or one or more payments related thereto, to a participant who permanently leaves or has permanently left covered employment, or to a surviving beneficiary, which payments by themselves or in combination with Social Security, Railroad Retirement, or workmen's compensation benefits provide a substantially level income to the recipient.

Straight life annuity means a series of level periodic payments payable for the life of the recipient, but does not include any combined annuity form, including an annuity payable for a term certain and life.

[61 FR 34028, July 1, 1996, as amended at 74 FR 59096, Nov. 17, 2009]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 76 FR 34601, June 14, 2011, the introductory text of § 4022.2 was amended by removing the words “annuity, Code” and adding in their place “annuity, bankruptcy filing date, Code”; and by removing the words “nonforfeitable benefit, normal retirement age” and adding in their place “nonforfeitable benefit, non-PPA 2006 bankruptcy termination, normal retirement age”, effective July 14, 2011.

§ 4022.3 Guaranteed benefits.

Except as otherwise provided in this part, the PBGC will guarantee the amount, as of the termination date, of a benefit provided under a plan to the extent that the benefit does not exceed

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the limitations in ERISA and in subpart B, if—

(a) The benefit is, on the termination date, a nonforfeitable benefit;

(b) The benefit qualifies as a pension benefit as defined in § 4022.2; and

(c) The participant is entitled to the benefit under § 4022.4.

[61 FR 34028, July 1, 1996; 61 FR 67943, Dec. 26, 1996]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 76 FR 34601, June 14, 2011, § 4022.3 was amended by designating the introductory text as paragraph (a) with the heading “General.”, redesignating paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) as paragraphs (1), (2), and (3), and adding a new paragraph (b), effective July 14, 2011. For the convenience of the user, the added text is set forth as follows:

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(b) *PPA 2006 bankruptcy termination.* (1) *Substitution of bankruptcy filing date.* In a PPA 2006 bankruptcy termination, “bankruptcy filing date” is substituted for “termination date” each place that “termination date” appears in paragraph (a) of this section.

(2) *Condition for entitlement satisfied between bankruptcy filing date and termination date.* If a participant becomes entitled to a subsidized early retirement or other benefit before the termination date (or on or before the termination date, in the case of a requirement that a participant attain a particular age, earn a particular amount of service, become disabled, or die) but on or after the bankruptcy filing date (or after the bankruptcy filing date, in the case of a requirement that a participant attain a particular age, earn a particular amount of service, become disabled, or die), the subsidy or other benefit is not guaranteed because the participant had not satisfied the conditions for entitlement by the bankruptcy filing date. In such a case, the participant may have been put into pay status with the subsidized early retirement or other benefit by the plan administrator, because the plan was ongoing at the time. Even though the subsidy or other benefit is not guaranteed, the participant may be entitled to another benefit from PBGC (at that time or in the future). If so, PBGC will continue paying the participant a benefit, but in an amount reduced to reflect that the subsidy or other benefit is not guaranteed. PBGC will also allow a similarly situated participant who had not started receiving a subsidized early retirement or other benefit before PBGC became trustee of the plan to begin receiving a benefit (if the participant would have been allowed under the plan to begin receiving

benefits and has reached his Earliest PBGC Retirement Date, as defined in § 4022.10), but in an amount that does not include the subsidy or other benefit.

(3) *Examples.* (i) *Vesting.* A plan provides for 5-year “cliff” vesting—i.e., benefits become 100% vested when the participant completes five years of service; before the five-year mark, benefits are 0% vested. The contributing sponsor of the plan files a bankruptcy petition on November 15, 2006. The plan terminates with a termination date of December 4, 2007, and PBGC becomes statutory trustee of the plan. A participant had four years and six months of service at the bankruptcy filing date and became vested in May 2007. None of the participant’s benefit is guaranteed because none of the benefit was nonforfeitable as of the bankruptcy filing date.

(ii) *Subsidized early retirement benefit.* The facts regarding the plan are the same as in Example (i) (paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section), but the plan also provides that a participant may retire from active employment at any age with a fully subsidized (i.e., not actuarially reduced) early retirement benefit if he has completed 30 years of service. The plan also provides that a participant who is age 60 and has completed 20 years of service may retire from active employment with an early retirement benefit, reduced by three percent for each year by which the participant’s age at benefit commencement is less than 65. A participant was age 61 and had 29 years and 6 months of service at the bankruptcy filing date. The participant continued working for another six months, then retired as of June 1, 2007, and immediately began receiving from the plan the fully subsidized “30-and-out” early retirement benefit. PBGC will continue paying the participant a benefit, but PBGC’s guarantee does not include the full subsidy for the “30-and-out” benefit, because the participant satisfied the conditions for that benefit after the bankruptcy filing date. The guarantee does include, however, the partial subsidy associated with the “60/20” early retirement benefit, because the participant satisfied the conditions for that benefit before the bankruptcy filing date.

(iii) *Accruals after bankruptcy filing date.* The facts regarding the plan are the same as in Example (i) (paragraph (b)(3)(i) of this section). A participant has a vested, accrued benefit of \$500 per month as of the bankruptcy filing date. At the plan’s termination date, the participant has a vested, accrued benefit of \$512 per month. His guaranteed benefit is limited to \$500 per month—the accrued, nonforfeitable benefit as of the bankruptcy filing date.